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## Signs of the Uniqueness of the Ukrainian Printed Book in the Context of the Global Digitalisation of Art

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*The aim of the article* is to explore the features of the uniqueness of a classic printed book as a valuable source of art studies analysis against the backdrop of dynamic transformations in Ukrainian book design. The article seeks to determine the prospects for its development as an artistic and project form, and ways to preserve the relevant design traditions. *Results.* The perception of traditional printed books in Ukraine today has changed in the context of the global digitisation of art. In this regard, the following opposing positions of scholars are highlighted: some predict a new phase of life for printed books, which involves the transformation of their socio-cultural role and the acquisition of different artistic content, while others underestimate the potential of traditional paper publications compared to innovative electronic formats. However, it is worth noting that the modern Ukrainian printed book has exclusive visual and aesthetic characteristics, demonstrating a unique synthesis of subject-spatial and artistic-design solutions. These characteristics include the long-term preservation of book design traditions, presentation of the designer's own artistic style (illustrator), tactile features (paper type, frame type, etc.), as well as the consistency of the layout at all levels of its implementation. The article proves this fact by comparing the design features of classic book editions with their alternative forms: electronic (multimedia) and interactive editions, as well as art books. *The scientific novelty* of the article consists in a comprehensive examination of the coexistence of various book forms on the modern domestic book market, their mutual influence, and the formulation of prospects for the development of the Ukrainian traditional printed books based on theoretical and empirical research of relevant sources, which was carried out for the first time. *Conclusions.* The article demonstrates that the highest potential of a traditional printed book lies in its highly differentiated design, unique artistic, genre and functional characteristics. The guarantee of the future of such publications is the mandatory presence of artistic and creative components in the book ensemble, as well as a genre-functional variable component.

*Keywords:* printed book; e-book; interactive book; multimedia book; art book; book design; digital format

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## Introduction

In the era of the digital revolution, in all areas of human life, there is a need to talk about the artistic product that becomes rare due to these circumstances. Such a product is the printed book, which, with its centuries-old glorious history, has experienced “artistic stress” caused by the active dynamics of introducing “non-native” elements in the artistic and technological aspects of the design tools. We are not talking about antique books or museum artefacts, but rather ordinary printed publications with traditional artistic and constructive execution, accessible to consumers, which, however, are rapidly approaching the category of valuable art products.

It is fair to mention that innovative design technologies, capable of realising any bold design ideas, have both evolutionary and regressive effects on the classic paper book. On the one hand, they successfully address a range of design and production issues, but on the other hand, they challenge the harmony of the artistic and compositional system of the publication, its structural and conceptual strength. Therefore, in a context where alternative book design options confidently cancel the previous boundaries of the design space, it is necessary to separate relevant examples not only on a genre and typological level but also on an artistic and aesthetic level and in every possible way contribute to preserving the signs of the uniqueness of the printed book.

*Recent research and publication analysis.* In the circles of scholars, the issues of transformations of modern book design are actively discussed: distinct periods, different analytical categories, in the context of various author’s concepts, and so on. Researchers show considerable interest in the experiments of designers with immersive technologies, synthetic design approaches, and related issues.

V. Teremko, an experienced publisher and scholar, argues that no communication tool (audio, internet, multimedia, etc.) can replace the authenticity of the written (printed) text for the reader. In one of his articles, he addresses the important topic of the author’s role in the literary and publishing process, emphasising its network aspect. Thus, accepting the fact of the author’s desacralisation in the space of Internet culture, V. Teremko asserts the opposite, because “in fact, the Internet is not able to turn a non-author into an author, taking away from the author what ontologically belongs only to him and depends solely on him” (Teremko, 2012, p. 18). The publisher’s conviction about the inability of Internet resources to influence the essential and procedural aspects of creativity is a key thesis in the development of the topic of this article.

Moreover, V. Teremko’s (2012) reflections on the contemporary role of the author in the Ukrainian book publishing industry are equally relevant for both author-illustrators and author-designers. “Even the latest industrial, publishing trends (seriality, minimizing authorial participation – the so-called ‘literary factories’, releasing works by different authors under a single pseudonym, the right to use which is owned by the publishing house; ‘collaborationist’ creativity; packaging (fan fiction) do not de-actualise the figure of the author” (p. 18).

O. Pozharytska (2022) draws a conclusion about the conceptual affinity of game-type books with digital editions and computer games. Characteristic features of interactive printed game editions are procedurality, hypermedia, multimodality (poly-coding), non-linearity of the narrative, increased simulativeness, etc. According to the researcher, “game books, formally presented as printed works, in their essence manifest

the main principle of a computer game – the possibility of different ‘modes of existence for the player’” (p. 176).

H. Lystvak (2011) considered the originality of the “artist’s book”, O. Karakoz (2019) studied the book as a phenomenon of contemporary sociocultural space, O. Rudenko (2020) presented the art of the book as an aesthetic source of spiritual culture, K. Vahanova (2020) looked for the advantages and disadvantages of electronic publications, N. Skliarenko and I. Bukharina (2022), N. Skliarenko and M. Kolosnichenko (2022) studied immersive and interactive technologies in book design, etc. However, the uniqueness of the Ukrainian printed book, enriched both in terms of content and aesthetics, has not yet been studied against the background of numerous innovative book forms and technical publishing experiments.

### **Aim of the article**

In the context of the article’s topic, it is important not only to explore the features of the uniqueness of the traditional printed book as a valuable source for art studies analysis amidst the dynamic transformations of Ukrainian book design but also to determine the prospects of its development as an artistic and design form and ways to preserve the relevant design traditions.

The aforementioned objective was achieved through the application of theoretical and empirical methods, which made it possible to synchronise both areas of research and come to a general conclusion regarding the solution to the outlined issue.

### **Main research material**

The contemporary reader was born on the groundwork of the intellectualised 20<sup>th</sup> century for a new philosophical and artistic understanding of the world. In the Ukrainian present, a person holding a paper book evokes a range of emotions and feelings, from respect to curiosity. After all, such a powerful image can reveal many current trends not only in the artistic process but also in cultural, educational, and social issues, all of which are vital aspects of state policies in the field of publishing.

Some researchers predict a new phase of life for the printed book characterised by the change in its socio-cultural role of such a publication and the acquisition of a different artistic content due to “the objective inevitability of transformational phobias, as well as the aggressiveness of the operators of the modern media book business, backed by powerful lobbying forces and tools, and the activation of various mercantile interests around it” (Teremko, 2011, p. 16). V. Teremko (2011) reasonably sees the most powerful argument in favour of the evolutionary future of a printed book in the indisputable fact that modern civilisation was formed according to the written (printed) type, and not the screen type. After all, “the book, in a profound sense, is one of the most important foundations of contemporary civilisation, created in unity with material and spiritual forces”, which significantly expands its horizons (p. 16).

At the same time, considering the previous experience of implementing telecommunication, computer technologies, and other innovations, concerns raised by art

experts are quite logical. They are worried about the fate of classic book publications, possibly overestimating the potential of innovative electronic book formats. However, it is indisputable that the more complex and subtle a technological system is, the more factors influence its effectiveness (Rodyhin, 2016). Unfortunately, we have had the opportunity to witness the high vulnerability of modern digital technologies, experiencing an energy crisis in all spheres of life as a result of the military aggression of the neighbouring country.

Let's consider alternative book forms available on the contemporary domestic market in comparison with classical ones: electronic, multimedia, interactive publications, as well as art books in various interpretations. Each of the mentioned design products may include the design characteristics of others but still retain its main marker. For example, an electronic book should be interactive a priori, but interactive is not always electronic, since it can become interactive with the help of immersive technologies or even just original design solutions (pop-up, toy book, etc.). Furthermore, multimedia publications, by their nature, involve an electronic format (enabling the transmission of diverse information through multiple channels simultaneously) while being recognised as a separate type of book production, similar to art books, which can combine features of graphic novels or interactive books alongside their primary artistic and project-based form. The results of observations and corresponding analysis are presented in the form of infographics, where characteristic "borrowings" of one book format from another are indicated by colour (Fig. 1):

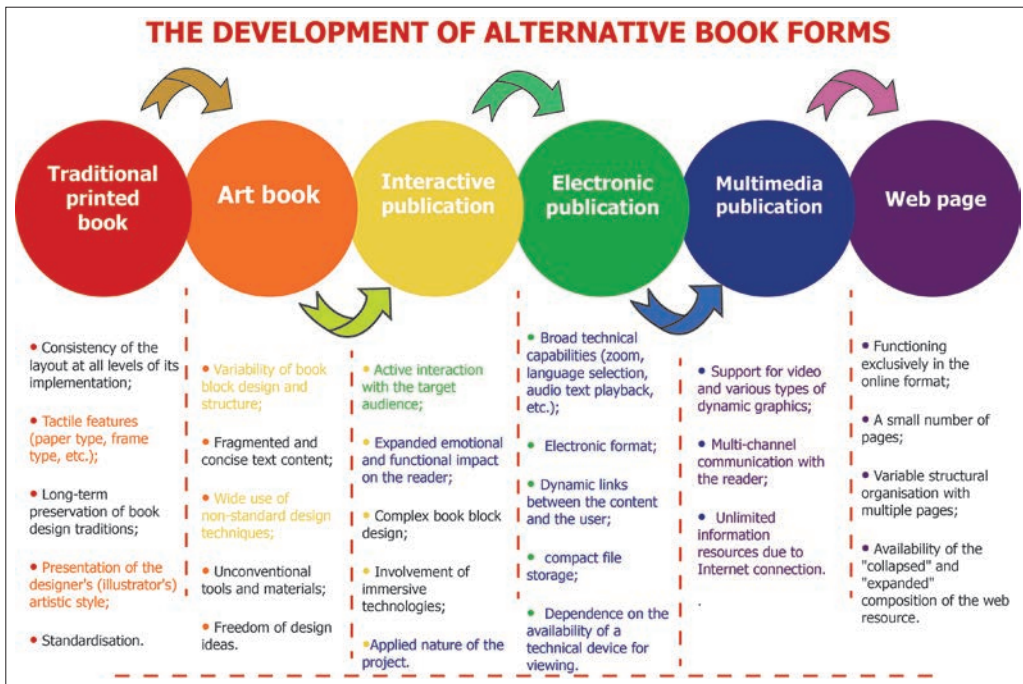


Figure 1. The development of alternative book forms, proposed by the author

Thus, in comparison to its electronic counterpart, the traditional *printed book* contrasts primarily with its stable layout characteristics, which, together with artistic and visual elements, can preserve the designer's graphic manner for many centuries, historically documenting relevant artistic trends and creative issues. On the other hand, *the electronic edition* (including *multimedia*) has its own design and aesthetic features, primarily characterised by the non-linearity and acentricity of the text, formed from an infinite network of various text blocks that interact with each other in a certain order, creating a multi-layered and multi-directional informational resource from the point of view of the reading trajectory.

V. Teremko (2012) emphasises that, like other technical tools, computers cannot control the profound processes of creativity, except for optimising the author's work. In this context, "no technologically advanced tool guarantees a higher level of talent expression" (p. 20). Another interesting observation related to the analyzed issue was expressed by K. Rodyhin: "Comprehensive knowledge of high technologies is concentrated in the hands of a narrow circle of specialists, a kind of caste of modern 'magicians', and the close nature of the 'black boxes' contrasts strikingly with the open universe of the Gutenberg Galaxy, its pathos of the universal distribution of knowledge" (Rodyhin, 2016, p. 208). The hypothetical disappearance of printed books is considered by the researcher as anti-cultural and counter-progressive, despite all the advantages of electronic technologies.

Some argue that the electronic book is just an intermediate stage in the development of book publishing in Ukraine because, based on the experience of previous decades, we know that the oversaturation of anything in art eventually leads to its rejection. However, it is worth noting that all electronic book forms, synthesising the characteristics of both traditional publications and web projects, indicate their direct relationship with internet resources and demonstrate their own multi-genre universality. The adaptation of standard design elements of a traditional paper book to the web format is shown in Fig. 2.

The reason for this, on the one hand, is seen in society's inclination towards everything new, when with the advent of high technologies, previously dominant traditional methods are being adapted to new opportunities (*an applied aspect of design*). On the other hand, it is due to the expansion of the modern advertising and information space, of which books are a part, and therefore must respond to all its transformations (*informative and communicative aspect*).

If we distinguish *the multimedia book* among electronic publications, then it is worth emphasising its project peculiarity, which is expressed primarily by increasing communication capabilities due to the expansion of information presentation channels and complicating the visual structure, which is demonstrated by numerous layers of different types of graphics combined with different quality design effects. It can be argued how appropriate it is, in this case, to use such terms as "content", "visual", "storyboard" or "storytelling" as characteristics of the specified products, but it is undeniable that new artistic achievements and horizons require a "progressive" vocabulary.

*Interactive books*, in all their manifestations, have gained significant popularity today, particularly in the fields of children's and educational literature. Among such projects, paper interactive publications deserve special attention, which, in addition

to their primary function of reading and viewing, interact with the target audience by prompting specific actions (such as colouring, drawing, cutting, pasting, retrieving, turning, etc.), resulting in qualitative changes within the book ensemble. These actions are quite natural for printed books, which already by their design involve tactile contact with the reader while flipping pages. Together with intellectual tasks designed for the child's cognitive activity and development of ingenuity (solving crosswords, rebuses, taking quizzes, etc.), this type of interactivity is quite effective in the educational process. In Ukraine, publishers such as Ranok, Vivat, Vydavnytstvo Staroho Leva, and others offer such interactive productions.

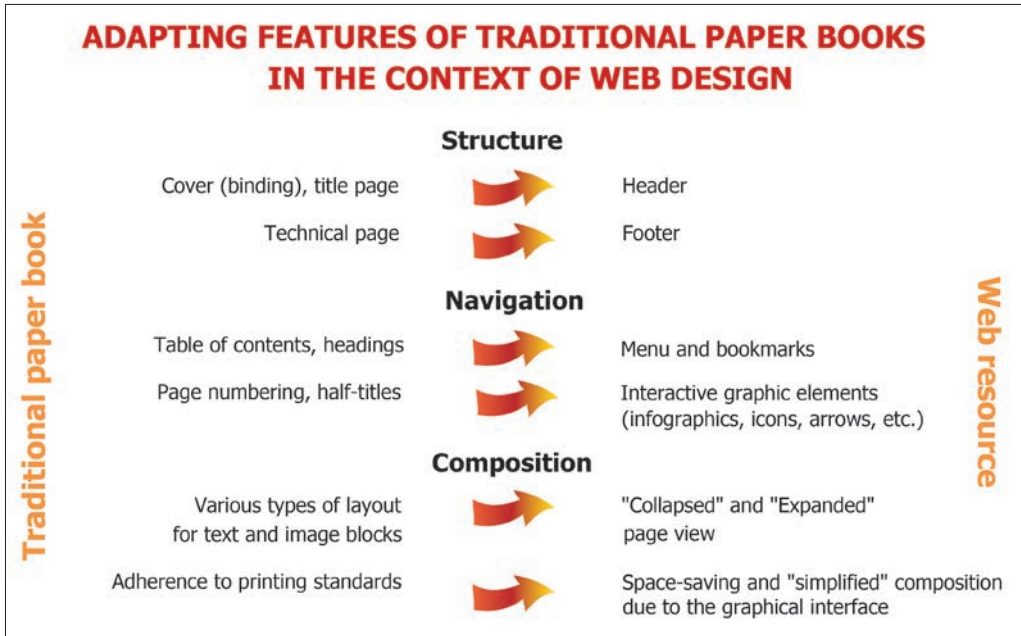


Figure 2. The adaptation of features of a traditional paper book in the context of web design, developed by the author

Another type of interactive publications is represented by the aforementioned electronic books, which implement interactivity on multiple levels: *user* (activating menu options), *search-related* (communication with additional information resources via hyperlinks, QR codes, etc.), and *entertainment and aesthetic* (reader interaction with video and audio content, animated graphics, etc.).

A transitional form of interactive publications between paper and electronic ones are printed books designed with the use of variable reality — AR-, MR-, XR-technologies. For the full experience of such projects, a suitable gadget with the necessary application for viewing images with these effects is required. This fact fundamentally changes the traditional artistic image of the printed book, complementing its design characteristics with the features of a motion product, gaming project, and media art. Examples of such productions are books from publishers like A-BA-BA-HA-LA-MA-HA, Art Nation, Bila Sova, Educational book — Bohdan,

KievSeaPirates, Vydavnytstvo Staroho Leva, Gutenbergz, art studio Agrafka, and others.

*The art book* as a separate space for embodying creative ideas is not a new concept. However, today, such publications, whether created by hand in a single copy or printed in a small edition, acquire a special artistic freshness amidst the oversaturation of the market with digital products. The annual “Book Arsenal” in Kyiv and book design exhibitions present interesting examples of these projects, but it is still fair to state the insufficient development of this area of design activity in Ukraine.

Within the project sector of art books, there are several subtypes that differ in the design style, applied design techniques, purpose, and so on. One example of the search for improvement and expansion of the possibilities of a book as such in the art book format is the “artist’s book”. Researcher H. Lystvak (2012), analysing the non-standard features of the book design of such publications, identifies the following unique characteristics that are possible in a book project:

1. The non-standard arrangement of traditional elements in the book’s structure (in particular, source data and technical information) — modification of the components of the scientific reference apparatus;
2. Changing the construction of the book publication;
3. Fragmentary and concise text content;
4. The use of collage techniques, artistic and graphic properties of the text, and font accentuation.

If we supplement the above list with the use of the original author’s techniques of artistic design, as well as unexpected materials and tools for implementing the designer’s creative idea, we will get a fairly objective generalised description of the art book as an artistic and design technology. Some of these products, like a visual book, focus on graphic content in its creative manifestations, which establishes a close relationship between an art book and comics, graphic novels, and other similar publications. In this regard, it is appropriate to distinguish a relevant segment of book publications — derivatives of art book forms — with a more visually saturated component but without the frame-by-frame composition inherent in comic book culture. Such a book-album or book-gallery is usually painted by hand or presents digital art that can fulfil a completely independent aesthetic mission in the context of the project.

Considering all of the above, the printed book not only reaffirms its status as a traditionally organised source of information with features of artistic material work but also proves its own project “fertility”, as it serves as the prototype for all innovative book forms. The priority level in the design of printed book products is primarily its constructive and typographic solution. At the same time, we have a unique exclusivity of the synthesis of subject-spatial and artistic-constructive art.

Thus, each printed book edition becomes a visual guide and a visual source for studying book design in its various manifestations: in relation to geographical localisation, chronological context, author’s artistic features, stylistic affiliation, and so on. The main carriers of the corresponding design features are illustrations and decorative graphic elements (if any), the structural organisation of the publication and its composition (including the type of layout), font design, and printing execution. As can be seen, the listed components comprise precisely those aspects of book design that form the special features of a paper publication (Oliinyk, 2022).

## Conclusions

Taking into account all the above, we understand that there is a need to formulate an appropriate manifesto that would document the main provisions of the prospects for preserving a printed book as a separate art form, despite all the innovative digital transformations, and publish the algorithm of a corresponding “uniqueness strategy”. However, it is obvious that the most resilient position in the near future will be held by highly differentiated paper books endowed with unique design and artistic, genre and functional qualities. The special features of a traditional printed publication are formed by its illustrations and decorative graphic elements (if any), its structural organisation and composition (including layout type), font design, and printing execution. The promising formula of a printed book as a design project includes mandatory components of artistic and creative work and a variable aspect expressed through genre and functional characteristics. After all, in the current conditions in Ukraine, only a well-aimed creative and error-free user strategy can ensure a new respectable status of the book in its classical sense and the inviolability of the traditional book publication among aggressively oriented competing book forms.

*The scientific novelty* of the article consists in a comprehensive examination of the coexistence of various book forms on the modern domestic book market, their mutual influence, and the formulation of prospects for the development of the Ukrainian traditional printed books based on theoretical and empirical research of relevant sources, which was carried out for the first time.

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## Ознаки унікальності української друкованої книги в контексті глобальної диджиталізації мистецтва

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*Мета статті* — дослідити ознаки унікальності класичної друкованої книги як цінного джерела мистецтвознавчого аналізу на тлі динамічних трансформацій українського книжкового дизайну, а також визначити перспективи її розвитку як художньо-проектного різновиду та шляхи збереження відповідних традицій проєктування. *Результати дослідження*. Сприйняття традиційної друкованої книги в Україні сьогодні зазнало змін з огляду на глобальну диджиталізацію мистецтва. У зв'язку з цим виокремлюють такі протилежні позиції науковців: одні пророкують друкованій книзі нову фазу життя, що передбачає трансформацію її соціокультурної ролі та набуття іншого мистецького змісту, а інші недооцінюють потенціал традиційного паперового видання, як порівняти з інноваційними електронними форматами. Однак варто зазначити, що сучасна українська друкована книга має ексклюзивні візуально-естетичні характеристики, демонструє унікальний синтез предметно-просторового та художньо-конструктивного рішення: довгострокове збереження традиції книжкового дизайну, презентація авторської художньої манери дизайнера (ілюстратора), специфічні тактильні особливості (ґатунок паперу, тип оправи тощо), а також унормованість і сталість макета на всіх рівнях його виконання. Цей факт доведено в статті через зіставлення проєктних особливостей класичного книжкового видання та його альтернативних форм: електронних (мультимедійних) та інтерактивних видань, а також артбуків. *Наукова новизна* статті полягає у всебічному висвітленні проблем співіснування та взаємовпливу різних книгоформ на сучасному вітчизняному книжковому ринку; формулюванні перспектив розвитку української традиційної друкованої книги

на основі теоретико-емпіричного дослідження відповідної джерельної бази, що було здійснено вперше. *Висновки.* Встановлено, що потенціал традиційної друкованої книги полягає в її дизайнерській високодиференційованості, унікальних проектно-художніх і жанрово-функціональних характеристиках, а запорукою розвитку є обов'язкова наявність у книжковому ансамблі компонентів артисації та креативу, а також жанрово-функціонального варіативного складника.

*Ключові слова:* друкована книга; електронна книга; інтерактивна книга; мультимедійна книга; артбук; дизайн книги; цифровий формат

